

of:

receiving an incoming access request;

assigning a proxy agent to the incoming access request in accordance with at least a port number indicated in the incoming access request;

verifying the authority of the incoming access request to access the protected network element; and thereafter

forming a connection to the network element via the proxy agent on behalf of the incoming access request if the authority of the incoming access request is verified;

wherein the step of verifying the authority of the incoming access request includes:

verifying that a user associated with [an] the incoming access request is authorized to access the network element; [and,]

checking the accuracy of a first password associated with the incoming access request; and,

communicating a second password to the user using a communication channel other than the network connection, which second password is to be entered by the user to advance a log-on process.

REMARKS

After entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 2-5, 7, 10, 11, 13-18, 20-22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 31-32, 34-41, and 47-51 are pending in the application. Claims 47-51 have been amended to correct informalities and errors of a typographical nature and to make the claims particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicants regard as their invention.